

Ac Chun

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

ACTION

December 3, 1971

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

MEMORANDUM FOR: GENERAL HAIG

FROM: LES JANKA *[Signature]*

John King, in the Public Affairs Office at State Department, called me to tell me that he has received several calls last night and one this morning from a Paul Stevens of the Boston Herald Traveler. Stevens has been talking with Governor Sargent who has apparently shown or told Stevens about a letter from the President which Stevens feels indicates that the President has assured Sargent that the President will raise the prisoner issue (Fecteau, Downey, et al.) when he goes to China. Stevens also says that Sargent has told him of a second personal telephone conversation with the President in which the President reiterated these assurances and, according to Stevens, implied that he might even bring the four prisoners back with him.

(Tab B)

The President's letter to Sargent is attached. It of course contains no such assurances. But somehow Stevens is getting reports of greater promises from Governor Sargent. As sensitive as this is, I would think you would want to bring this to Henry's and possibly Haldeman's attention, perhaps to have them get to Sargent to turn this guy off before a press story comes out which forces us to issue a denial and therefore appear to make a liar out of a friendly governor.

Obviously, this also has sensitivities for the Chinese since they might misinterpret a public statement like this and the results could be an inadvertent complication of whatever chance we might have to get the prisoners back.

If you feel it is needed, a memorandum from HAK to Haldeman is attached informing Haldeman of the situation and suggesting that he call Sargent to turn off this story before it starts. (Tab A)

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

DEC 6 1971

CONFIDENTIAL

MEMORANDUM FOR: R. H. HALDEMAN
FROM: HENRY A. KISSINGER |5/
SUBJECT: Governor Sargent and PRC
Prisoners

The Public Affairs Office at State Department has informed us that a reporter of the Boston Herald Traveler has been talking with Governor Sargent who has apparently told the reporter about a letter from the President indicating Presidential assurances that the President will raise in Peking the matter of four U.S. citizens held by the PRC. The reporter also claims that Governor Sargent has told him of a telephone conversation he had with the President in which the President reiterated these assurances and according to the reporter implied that he might even bring the four prisoners back with him.

This is clearly a sensitive matter since the President's letter (attached) did not contain such assurances but a press story on this matter could give a wrong signal to the Chinese and complicate the possibility for the release of the prisoners and additionally put the Administration in the position of having to deny a story attributed to a friendly governor. It would be helpful if you could call Governor Sargent and inform him of this reporter's going off the track and ask the Governor to talk with the paper to prevent any misleading story from emerging.

Attachment

CONFIDENTIAL

LJ:am:12/3/71

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

October 8, 1971

Dear Frank:

Thank you for your letter of August 30 calling to my attention, in light of my recently announced plans to visit China, the plight of Richard G. Fecteau and John T. Downey.

May I assure you that I am quite thoroughly aware of their situation, as well as that of two other Americans imprisoned in China. You can be confident that I consider their release a matter of great importance.

Sincerely,



Honorable Francis W. Sargent
Governor of Massachusetts
Boston, Massachusetts 02133

EDITOR

October 7, 1971

MEMORANDUM FOR:

THE PRESIDENT

FROM:

HENRY A. KISSINGER *HK*

SUBJECT:

Suggested Reply from You to Governor
Sargent of Massachusetts Concerning
Messrs. Richard G. Fecteau and
John T. Downey

At Tab A is a suggested reply from you to Governor Sargent, who has written you asking to intercede during your trip to China to secure the release of Messrs. Richard G. Fecteau and John T. Downey from their imprisonment there. The reply states that you are well aware of the situation of Messrs. Fecteau and Downey as well as the other two American prisoners, and consider their release a matter of great importance.

The draft reply has been cleared with Ray Price's office.

Recommendation:

That you sign the proposed letter to Governor Sargent at Tab A.

*Henry for HAK
for JPR*

Approved for Presidential Signature

WILLIAM H. RICHARDS

JOHN H. HONOLANDER

Suggested Reply from the President
to Governor Sargent of Massachusetts
Concerning Messrs. Teetsau, Bawney
and John T. Downey

At Tab A is a memorandum from you to the President attaching
a suggested reply from him to Governor Sargent, who has asked
the President to intercede during his China trip to secure the
release of Messrs. Teetsau and Bawney. The draft reply states
that the President is very much aware of the situation of Messrs.
Teetsau and Bawney as well as the other American prisoners, and
considers their release a matter of great importance.

The delay in reply is due to our awaiting standard language from
Ray Price's office for use in responding to a volume of mail on
this question.

Recommendation:

That you sign the memorandum to the President at Tab A.

→ 143

THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT
STATE HOUSE, BOSTON 02133

August 30, 1971

Dear Mr. President:

On August 11 Councillor Thomas J. Lane at a meeting of the Executive Council brought forward the cases of two United States Citizens, Richard G. Fecteau and John Downey, who have been in captivity in China for nineteen years. I know that you are well aware of the plight of these citizens.

It is the hope of Councillor Lane and myself that through your personal intercession during your forthcoming trip to the Mainland of China that the release of these two prisoners might be obtained.

Sincerely,

